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The Bureau of the Mint announced today plans for early resumption of coinage of one-cent pieces made of a copper alloy to supersede production of the present zinc-coated steel penny.

Metallurgists of the Bureau, with the cooperation of the War Production Board, have perfected methods of combining materials salvaged from expended shell cases and a relatively small proportion of virgin copper so as to permit return to a close approximation of the pre-war bronze cent.

Production of the zinc-coated steel piece will be suspended at the year end, and Mr. Lincoln will look out on the American scene from his familiar copperish backdrop in new coinage of pennies starting January 1.

The new alloy will contain slightly less copper and slightly more zinc than the peacetime formula, but the coin will be quite similar in appearance to the traditional cent. It will work satisfactorily in vending machines, being just slightly lighter in weight than the standard bronze, and a trifle heavier than the steel substitute.

Mrs. Nellie Tayloe Ross, Director of the Mint, said that experiments recently conducted with the recovered shell cases and added virgin copper proved the alloy satisfactory for coinage. Treasury officials and officials of the War Production Board have been collaborating for several weeks in working out details of the allotment of sufficient copper, including the scrap shells, to permit return to the copper-alloy coin.

Because of the enlarged demand for one-cent pieces, due to accelerated business, a demand which has strained the facilities of the Mint, the zinc-steel coins already produced will remain in circulation. However, the natural darkening to which the coins are subject soon will remove the chief source of complaint from the public -- the similarity of the piece to the dime.

Pointing out that the approaching Christmas buying season will intensify coin requirements at a time when the Mint is already drawing on inventories, Mrs. Ross urged the public to accept as a wartime service project the necessity for keeping coins in circulation.

"Every one-cent piece resting in a coin bank, bureau drawer or other hiding place, whether copper or steel, calls for a replacement at the expense of war-necessary metals and manpower," Mrs. Ross said. "Let us keep small coins working, through our regular spending."

The Mint will use as a base for the new cents small arms cartridge cases recovered by military authorities from proving grounds, firing ranges and other training areas for troops. These cases consist of 70 percent copper and 30 percent zinc, and if melted down with enough virgin copper to bring the copper content up to 85 or 90 percent, the alloy is adaptable to coinage.

The former bronze coin consisted of 95 percent copper and 5 percent zinc and tin. The amount of copper needed will be about half that required for the all-virgin copper alloy. The Mint project will have an important place in the salvage of war-wasted materials.

When zinc coated steel was adopted for the one-cent piece it was the only metal obtainable for the purpose. Arms plants were facing shutdowns because of the metal scarcity. The War Production Board had withdrawn allotment of copper to the Mint. Coins of zinc, coins of plastics and coins of all sorts of alloys and materials were considered, and ruled out in turn as consuming critical items in the military economy. Meantime, demand for coins continued at an unprecedented rate. The penny of low carbon steel, coated with zinc to prevent rust was specified with the approval of Treasury Secretary Morgenthau and Donald M. Nelson, Chairman of the War Production Board, after the Congress had passed permissive legislation at the end of 1942.

The first of the new coins were struck in February 1943, and production through September has totalled 584,000,000 pieces.

The public as a whole did not take kindly to the wartime cent, the chief complaint being that when new, the silvery appearance made for confusion with the 10-cent coin. However, it was pointed out at the Mint that its adoption resulted in a substantial saving of copper, at a critical period of the supply situation.

Record production of the bronze cent in the fiscal year 1942 of nearly a billion and a half pieces consumed 4,600 tons of virgin copper, sufficient to meet the requirements of the metal in manufacturing one and a quarter million shells for field guns.

Return to the copper alloy coin will not require legislation, since the measure passed last December authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury, with approval of the War Production Board, to specify materials to be used in the cent.

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